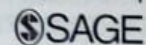


Book Reviews

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Geoffrey B. Robinson, *The Killing Season: A History of the Indonesian Massacres, 1965–1966* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018), 456 pp., US\$35.00. ISBN: 978-0-691-16138-9 (Hardcover).

Geoffrey Robinson, a historian, in his latest book, seeks to unpack the hitherto least investigated events of modern Indonesian history. The author undertakes a painstaking research to account for the most organized and gruesome anti-left purge that took place in 1965–1966, in which half a million communists and their sympathizers/supporters were killed, and another million were detained. The book repudiates the prevailing myths about the mass violence, which were based on socio-cultural and religious fissures in an ethnically diverse Indonesian state. Instead, the author argues, the mass killings were a consequence of a smear campaign by the Indonesian army to annihilate the members of the Communist Party 'down to the very roots'. The author attempts to locate these events in the context of Cold War by highlighting the conniving role of Western powers, like the USA and Britain in facilitating these mass killings. As against the conventional approaches, the book aims to situate the events in Indonesia in a comparative historical perspective. It deals with and contributes to the theoretical propositions revolving around the legacies and dynamics of mass killing, genocide and incarceration, and their ramifications for society. The book throws new light on an important episode in modern Indonesian history by meticulously researching the myriad aspects of the killings.

It may be interesting for those who are not well acquainted with this particular episode in Indonesian history, as to what actually triggered the brutal crackdown on the Left. Although, there are competing interpretations about the abortive coup of 1 October 1965, in which six senior Indonesian army officers were allegedly killed by junior army officers, who called themselves the Thirtieth of September Movement. The Indonesian army led by General Suharto, who became the second president after Sukarno in 1966, as well as various right-wing and militia groups were quick to blame the *Partai Komunis Indonesia* (PKI) for orchestrating the coup with Chinese support in a bid to take over the state. The army responded with what Robinson calls an 'awful juggernaut of arbitrary detention, interrogation, torture, mass killing, and political exile', to systematically obliterate the communists and their supporters. However, the evidence now available in the public domain indicates that General Suharto masterminded the coup by murdering

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